

TED 3 – University of Ljubljana

General topic & call-for-participation

Public Management Reforms now and in the future: does technology matter?

Over the last two decades (and more) we have been in Western European countries and even more frequently in all transition countries witnessing waves of public management reforms which sometimes turn out to be 'tsunamis', with very diverse outcomes. In the same period simultaneously an intensive process of implementation of new technologies, in particular ICTs in all segments, levels and procedures of Public Sector was going on, which in last decade culminated in development of so called e-government. Although e-government is potentially bringing about profound changes in the processes, services, communications and structures it is very seldom regarded as a kind of a public management reform. In the classical texts on PMRs, technology in general is not regarded either as an instrument of the reforms or an influencing factor, let alone the key driving and enabling force for them. Hence public sector is confronted with two types of processes of changes; both aiming to result in better government and governance however shaped and run on a very much different principles and drivers.

The notion of public management reform is by en large reserved for the politically driven top down directed large scale projects of changes in the PA systems. While informatization which only recently culminated in e-government was till the end of the last century predominantly bottom up driven process of technologically based changes in public sector which only in this decade attracted the attention of the politics and became a strategic issue. This is to some extent strange, because in business administration traditionally much attention has been given to the shaping influence of technology on the structure of organization, while simultaneously technology was considered to be an important source of strategic innovation. Hence, it seems to that reforms within public administration have been conceptualized, designed, driven and researched by very different groups of professionals and/or academics. In this 'transeuropean dialogue' we are trying to bring these worlds together.

The field of public administration/management - its development and in particular its reforms - is predominantly driven by principles stemming from 'classical' administrative or NPM doctrines. For the framework are serving political, social sciences or administrative law. In the debate, there is hardly any room for ICTs let alone technologies in general. Even some of the most prominent contemporary academics in the field like Pollitt and Bouckaert in their book 'Public Management Reform' don't find much place for the role of technology. But if according to Pollitt and Bouckaert "public management reform consists of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations", e-government can or should be considered as one of the most profound reform, bringing about radical changes to the processes (already visible) and to the structures (not yet as much as needed).

By contrast, the field of e-government is dominated by much different professionals/academics stemming from computer science, organizational sciences and business administration and different principles. In their papers, journals and books there is difficult to find hardly any public administration/management principles and theory and how to alienate these theories with the technological revolution going on in the public sector.

Thus although these two professional groups share the same 'subject of discourse' their approaches, principles, language even aims and objectives are quite often very different. Closer look into the programs of the professional and scientific conferences or leading journals is a good prove for this.

Most attempts at EGPA and NISPAcee conferences to narrow the gap and bringing these two arenas closer together, organizing special working groups focusing on ICTs in PA and e-government were only partially successful.

The main aim of the TED 3 would thus be to try to further narrow the gap between 'classical' administrative science and rather new field of technology based and driven changes and reforms in public sector (some of them profoundly changing it) and construct some bridges between both shores of the same river through open discussion among leading academics and professionals from both fields. Discussion should try to find answers on some questions which are important for further development of both fields, like:

- scanners, DNA testing and phone logging etc.) in further development of the public sector and the challenges of the public sector;
- what are organizational patterns and management models for new technology related departments, functions and services in public sector (like IT departments, CIOs, shared service centers and outsourcing)
- what is the role of ICTs in the modern public management reform which go beyond efficiency improvement and improving public service delivery;
- to what new organizational, mostly virtual patterns of organizations ICT's contribute within public administration, due to the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences across organizational boundaries;
- what will be the leading organizational and governance paradigms in the future in public management and how will ICT's and other technologies influence it;
- the impact of ICTs and technologies in general on the classical principles of PA/PM, like centralization/decentralization, specialization, transparency, openness accountability etc;
- the impact of ICT and other technologies through the introduction of new and other ways organization and governance principles like the network logic which makes it possible to coordinate and to allocate tasks in a different way;
- the redesign of business processes in public administration and the changing nature of bureaucracy (from bureaucracy towards infocracy or the emergence of system level bureaucracies)

In its last segment, TED3 will discuss the possible impact of non-ICT technology on Public Management and its reform, especially of new emerging bio- and nanotechnologies. How might – although this is highly speculative – future technologies impact PA/PM? What are the optimal PA/PM structures for supporting the development of future technologies? The focus on these future technologies will also allow us to look at ICT in context, because it implies 'post-ICT' times. It will also enable us to discuss more clearly the relationship of technology and (the PA/PM aspect of) governance, and particularly of mutual interdependence and indeed dependence, thereby going back to key elements of the ICT-PA-debate. This is all the more important as academic PA has been rather 'technology neglectful' over the past decade or two, and therefore we have missed out on most of the debate about the roles of technology which are going on in economics and sociology. TED3 will try to re-link ourselves with that discourse, which has major implications for PA and Public Management reform as well

Based on the papers that are brought in and selected, a number of topics will be discussed in depth. Hence, there will be no traditional paper presentations, although in the discussion itself reference is made to specific papers by the chairs of the dialogue. The best papers will be published in a special issue of NISPAcee Journal

Deadline for submitting a proposal:

The proposals will be submit by **10 December 2009**:

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